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SUBMISSION

ON

SCHOOL BUILDINGS
AND
SCHOOL BUILDINGS REGULATIONS

SEPTEMBER, 1975

ALBERTA SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION — 311 ROYAL ALEX PLACE, EDMONTON, ALBERTA T5G 0B4

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THE ALBERTA SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

Submission on

on

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

AND

SCHOOL BUILDINGS REGULATIONS

Edmonton, Alberta
September, 1975

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The province should provide for and encourage local governments to experiment and innovate in provision of school facilities.

2. The educational validity of the project should determine financial support.

3. Decisions governing the provision, design and function of school facilities should be made by the school board.

4. School boards should have access to the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation for funding the total school facility.

5. School buildings should reflect total community needs and as such ought to be constructed with that usage as a prime objective.

6. The School Buildings Board should be replaced by a Public Facilities Board.

Throughout Canadian history the "school" has played a vital role in the development of communities. The school, second only to the church as a "first" public building, became a meeting place for people to conduct business and social gatherings. The school, then as it still does today, brings people together through a common interest bond - education.

The purpose of schooling in the early development of the country was quite simply defined - attention to the three R's. In more recent years, however, it has become increasingly difficult for educators and laymen alike to define the purposes of "education".

Society is undergoing rapid changes - changes that affect the whole concept of "schooling". We are a very mobile society - 25% of the population will move once in every five years. The "Protestant Work Ethic" has lost many a disciple. We work less and play more - those of us who know how to play. By the year 2000 about 38% of our time will be devoted to leisure-time activities. Moral values and life styles have undergone tremendous, and for some traumatic, shifts - a decrease in the importance of the traditional family unit - an increase in birth control - working parents - urban and suburban congestion and rural sparsity.

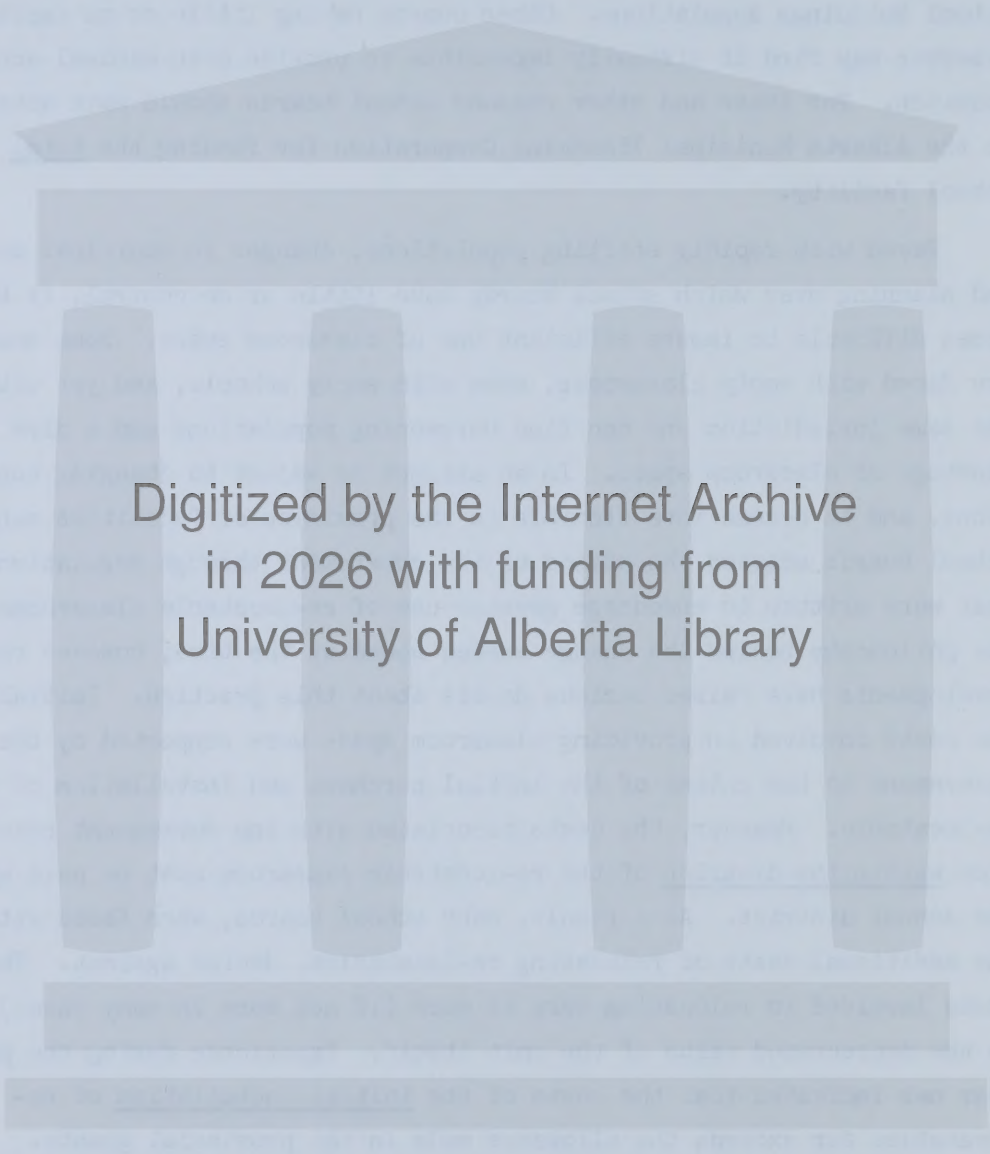
The development and expansion of business and industry creates a demand for workers in some cases totally different from the traditional. It is estimated that the average individual will be retrained four times in his lifetime to cope with changing job requirements. The preparation of the individual so that he will be able to contribute to, and strengthen the society to which he belongs must be the first priority of governments. The education of not only children, but each and every citizen is crucial to the success and stability of society.

The Provincial Government has a dual responsibility both to the Alberta public and to local government with regard to the provision of school facilities and financial support of same. It must maintain a basic standard of educational services and these must be made available to all

a degree of initiative on the part of trustees wishing to provide sound accommodations, and in fact can reflect upon the inadequacies of the School Buildings Regulations. Other boards having little or no capital reserves may find it virtually impossible to provide even minimal accommodation. For these and other reasons school boards should have access to the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation for funding the total school facility.

Faced with rapidly shifting populations, changes in municipal zoning and planning over which school boards have little or no control, it becomes difficult to insure efficient use of classroom space. Some boards are faced with empty classrooms, some with empty schools, and yet within the same jurisdiction one can find burgeoning populations and a dire shortage of classroom space. In an attempt to adjust to changing conditions, and to become more flexible in the provision of facilities many school boards adopted the advice of the government through regulations that were written to encourage greater use of re-locatable classrooms. The philosophy behind the change seemed sound at the time, however recent developments have raised serious doubts about this practice. Initially the costs involved in providing classroom space were supported by the government to the extent of the initial purchase and installation of the re-locatable. However, the costs associated with any subsequent relocation within the district of the re-locatable classroom must be paid by the school district. As a result, many school boards, when faced with the additional costs of relocating re-locatables, decide against. The costs involved in relocating were as much (if not more in many cases) as the depreciated value of the unit itself. Experience during the past year has indicated that the costs of the initial installation of re-locatables far exceeds the allowance made in the provincial grants.

The Alberta School Trustees' Association suggests that the School Buildings Board is outdated and inadequate to satisfy the rapidly changing demands for community facilities. Building community schools in the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future will require the support of several departments of government; a co-operative effort that will require facilitating authority which can cut across departmental territorial boundaries. Unless such an authority is established community facilities which reflect community need, both education and otherwise, will continue to exist largely on paper only.

Currently the School Buildings Board exerts tremendous authority and control in the provision of educational facilities:

1. It adjudicates on the statement of need,
2. It adjudicates on the preliminary sketch indicating the size of the building, the ratio of instructional space to non-instructional, the site, furniture, equipment.
3. It adjudicates on the final sketch plan,
4. It adjudicates on final plans and specifications,
5. It adjudicates on the amount of financial support from the School Foundation Program Fund,
6. It adjudicates on the award of tender.

All of the above exercises require periods of time during which construction costs can increase substantially.

The Alberta School Trustees' Association recommends that the School Buildings Board be abolished, and a Public Facilities Board be established with only three functions to perform:

1. to accept the statement of need
2. to accept the preliminary sketch plans
3. to recommend the amount of government funding.

REGULATIONS

By their very nature, regulations cannot stimulate educational progress and innovation. They are formulated for existing conditions or conditions that have appeared in the past and do not in any way allow for anticipation of future needs. They provide little, if any, room to allow school boards to anticipate future requirements, programs, innovations, social changes, needs and demands.

The Association believes that school boards should have increased authority in developing plans and specifications for new buildings, additions and renovations; and that the Public Facilities Board, as proposed, operate with a minimum of regulations.

Until such time as a Public Facilities Board is realized, the Association addresses the present School Buildings Regulations thusly:

1. Attendance Zones

Comment

School Boards in rural areas, and geographically large areas are experiencing great difficulty in meeting the utilization factor requirements. Continuation of some smaller, isolated schools will cause the utilization factor of the total jurisdiction to fall below the required percentage even though other schools in growing communities are bulging with students.

The Association trusts that the Minister will consider with favour any request to approve changes in attendance areas when boards are facing difficulty in providing school facilities for Alberta's citizens.

3. Areas

(c) Instructional Areas:

Comment

To recognize changes in programs, courses and instructional practices the following areas should be included as instruction areas:

stages
counselling rooms
Instructional Media centres
kitchens

(d) Non-Instructional Areas:

Comment

The section should be amended to read: "Non-instructional areas shall include all functional areas not classified as instructional".

6. Capacity

Comment

The government must recognize that there are conditions existing that would justify computational adjustments establishing the number of students which a school is considered capable of holding, and that the School Buildings Board should use numbers lower than those published in the regulations.

ECS and primary classrooms should be rated not higher than 20 - children in their early developmental years require special consideration.

Zero capacity for stages, counselling rooms, instructional media centres, and kitchens.

10. Renovation

Amend to read:

"A renovation, for the purpose of these regulations shall be remodelling of existing space in a school to fulfill a change of function, or a relocation of a portable or re-locatable classroom which is approved by the board".

Comment

The purpose of acquiring re-locatable units is to insure flexible and efficient use of facilities, therefore any subsequent moves of units should receive financial support.

13. Types of Schools

Amend to read:

"(a) An elementary school is one in which one or more of Grades I to VI are taught. Early Childhood Services programs may also be included in an elementary school".

16. Ratio of Instructional to Non-Instructional

Comment

Revise the percentage of non-instructional space to 40%.

Reflects more realistically the trends in all public and commercial buildings to more spacious areas, additional storage and working areas, the use of new and specialized equipment.

18. Approval of Maximum Construction Grants

Comment

The Association recommends that the square footage grants be constantly monitored when school tenders are received and at no time should the grant fall below 80% of the actual cost of construction tender, architect fees, site development and equipment.

19. (a) Water and/or sewage disposal

Comment

Increase the support to $3.00/sq. ft.

21. Establishment of the Amount of SFP Fund Support

Amend to read:

"(a) Capital sums accruing from the sale of a school, unless determined otherwise by the Minister persuant to Section 115 (1.1) of the School Act, or capital contributions from any other source including the Government of Canada shall be applied in the amount determined by the School Buildings Branch of the Department of Education to reduce the amount of support recognized by the School Buildings Board".

Comment

Delete the sale of school sites - school board may identify needs for these funds that are far more necessary than to have them applied toward new buildings.

Also: site acquisition is a board responsibility (financially) in many instances.

Add New Section:

21.1 The Minister for the purpose of finally establishing the eligible financial support of the approved portion of a project by the School Foundation Program Fund may make such other provisions for special cases and conditions not recognized or covered by these regulations as appears to him to be just and equitable.

Comment

This section would allow the Minister to make allowance for school building costs which are out of proportion. These additional costs may be because of isolation, rate of growth of community, rate of inflation, soil conditions, labour subsistence, access to materials, competitive market, function of the required space, and are beyond the control of school boards and the Department.

24. Long-Range Planning

Amend to read:

"Schools are to be planned for flexibility and expansion. Facilities for home economics, industrial arts, and physical education are to be set up in such a way that additions and/or alterations may readily be made. The Board may give direction in this regard both as to lay-out and as to dimensions".

27. (b)(ii) Disposal and/or Replacement

Comment

Revise the expected life of portable schools to fifteen years.

Fifteen years will more accurately reflect the actual life of a portable or re-locatable unit; and will be consistent with (i) in that a portable or re-locatable ties-in or plugs-in with other permanent types to make them a functional unit.

28. Unrecognized and Excess Area

Add New Section:

"28.1 Approval may be granted by the Minister for a School Division to finance through the Municipal Finance Corporation any areas in excess of the maximum recognized for support by the School Foundation Program".

30. School Sites

Revise (a) to read:

(a) The following may not be recommended for support by the School Foundation Program Fund.

Comment

Special conditions may warrant the support of expenditure by the School Foundation Program Fund.

Revise (a) (ii) to read:

"(ii) The preparation of a site, other than to provide for the foundations of the building or the relocation of a portable or re-locatable classroom".

31. Portable Schools

Amend to read:

"(c) The Board may establish maximum costs, in advance only, for the moving, resetting, and connecting of services of an existing portable classroom, and also for inspected and approved repairs to such a portable classroom. Thereafter the Board may recommend for financial support the actual costs in these regards up to the established maximums".

Comment

Support for the re-location of portables or re-locatables within a division or district should also be recognized.

33. Classrooms

Comment

The days of squeezing students into little boxes are past. Individual needs, room to breath, are recognized in all new facilities and so should they be in schools. Flexibility in instructional methods also call for room to move, to rearrange, to group into sub-units.

The Association recommends that the minimum classroom size be 900 sq. ft.

38. Physical Education Facilities

Comment

The Association believes that the need for proper physical education facilities exists at all levels of the educational system. The extent of the program will be determined by individual school districts but no one should be denied the opportunity to develop a complete program.

Canada has devoted considerable attention to the physical fitness of its citizens during the past few years and more emphasis should be placed in school facilities and programs.

Suggested amendments:

(a) - 2nd paragraph

"Stations are to be suitably divided and gymnasiums are to be built in such a way that they may be expanded by the addition of stations. The Board may substitute a multi-purpose activity room in schools serving less than 150 students where this type of facility serves elementary grades.

Gymnasium facilities may typically be recognized as follows:"

in the table:

include Category "D" with C

"(b) In Category D schools of four rooms or more, a multi-purpose activity room of up to 2000 sq. ft. may be recognized. A multi-purpose activity room of up to 2000 sq. ft. may also be recognized in a Category C school addition rather than an addition to an existing gymnasium".

43. Cafeteria/Ancillary Cafeteria/Study Hall Lunch Ancillary Facilities

Comment

More and more students are eating their noon lunch in or near the school facility. This may be because of convenience or necessity due to parents working (or in one parent families - the parent). School boards must recognize their responsibility to ensure that students have the proper facilities in which to eat, and if meals are provided, that nutritious and proper foods are supplied.

Suggested Amendments:

"(a) The Board may recognize a need for a cafeteria - study hall or cafeteria ancillary facility in a school serving a pupil enrollment of 500 or more, where one half of these students may be reasonably expected to remain for noon lunch at school".

strike out: in (a) "one-third" where it appears and substitute "one-half".

: in (b) "two-thirds" where it appears and substitute "one-half".

Amend also in (b)

Students	
250 - 500	1300 sq. ft. inclusive of kitchen, servery, and pertinent storage (not to exceed 300 sq. ft.)
over 500	2500 sq. ft. inclusive of kitchen, servery, and pertinent storage (not to exceed 300 sq. ft.)

Amend also

"(d) For schools enrolling fewer than 250 students but which also have lunch programs as defined in (b) above, the Board may recognize the need for a kitchen, storage and servery combined of up to 500 sq. ft."

47. (a) strike out "pertinent" and substitute "community-core".

49. (b) add after the words "a school-community library" the words "a kitchen, storage and servery facility,"

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